

SOWING TO THE FLESH – THE RESULT DEATH

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." – Galatians 6:7.

IN THIS text the Apostle seems to be emphasizing the fact that it is not enough that we make a consecration of ourselves to God, but we need to show by the earnestness of our conduct that we have received a transforming power into our lives. If we say that we are New Creatures and make a change merely in our profession, while still sowing to the flesh, the result will be not according to our profession, but according to our doing; and we shall reap the reward – corruption. Others may be deceived, and we may be deceived ourselves; but God will not be deceived. If we, on the contrary, to the best of our ability to understand the Lord's will, lay down our lives, sowing to the Spirit, then shall we reap everlasting life.

The Apostle is addressing the saints, the consecrated people of God, those who have presented their bodies living sacrifices, and whose sacrifices have been made acceptable through the merit of Christ. Being made New Creatures by the begetting of the Holy Spirit, these are to go on to reach perfection on the spirit plane.

If we, then, who are of this class, live after the flesh – according to the desires of the flesh – we shall *die*. This does not mean that if any of God's people should have some earthly desire or some wrong sentiment spring up in their minds they would die instantly, or that they would instantly be cut off from any hope of future life on the spirit plane. The thought is that if we *live* after the flesh – pursue the desires of the flesh, follow that course in life – the end will be death. And every seed thus sown tends *toward* death. If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption.

CERTAIN CARE FOR THE BODY NECESSARY

It would not be necessarily true in such sowing that we would *wish* to sow to the flesh. The Apostle intimates that the class he is addressing do *not* wish to sow to the flesh, but wish to do otherwise. But if we do sow to the flesh – to sensuality or to any earthly desires contrary to the new nature – the crop will come by and by. We might like to have better clothes and delicious food; we might desire to live on a good street and in a fine house; and these would not necessarily be sinful things. All these things are of the flesh, but they are not what the Apostle has especially in mind here. He is thinking of things of the fallen flesh, which are always contrary to the Spirit.

If we practice those things which our understanding of God's Word teaches us He would not approve, seeds are thus sown to the flesh. *Every inch that we yield* – whether in thought, word or action – means so much *decrease* of spiritual power; and the New Creature grows weaker. This might be done as respects our food and clothing, our home, our time, etc.; and this would be sowing to the flesh in such instances. If in accordance with our judgment of the Lord's will, we follow a course with a view to keeping our body in condition for best service, and if then our body, our flesh, has a craving for certain things that would not be for our spiritual welfare, the New Creature is to say, "No, you cannot have it"; or "These things are too expensive for *you*."

There are not many who have made a sacrifice of their flesh; but it is to those who have done this that the Apostle is speaking. I, as the New Creature, say to the Old Creature – the body – "I shall give you what I think is for your *good*. I do not understand that the Lord wishes me to kill you at once, for I need your service; but the Lord wishes me to have some practice in self-denial. You shall not have your desire now, because you do not really need it. I may, however, give it to you some time again, if I think that then you *need* it and if you are good."

THE BLACKSMITH AND THE DONKEY

If the New Creature gives a free rein to the old creature about what he shall read, or eat, how long he shall sleep, at what time he shall get up, where he shall go and how long he shall stay, etc., the New Creature will have his hands full – will he not? The Spirit of the Lord is to actuate the New Creature in thought, word and action and decide what he is to do, what he shall eat, where he shall go – is to control everything. If we sow to the Spirit, if we walk after the Spirit, we shall be overcomers, we shall reap life-everlasting. We must *not yield* to the old creature. By yielding we are sowing seed to the flesh, and by and by the old creature will say, "You have been in the habit of giving that to me, and you *must* let me have it"; and the result is likely to be disastrous to the New Creature.

The matter reminds us of one of AEsop's fables which many of us have read. On a cold, frosty morning, a donkey pushed his nose in at the door of a blacksmith shop, where it was warm from a glowing fire. The blacksmith said to the donkey, "Get out!" The donkey replied, "You are stingy! I am only getting my nose warm." Presently the blacksmith looked around and perceived that the donkey had his whole head in. The blacksmith said, "Now get out, will you?" But the donkey pleaded that he was only getting a little breath of warm air, that his head surely would not trouble the blacksmith. After awhile the blacksmith looked again and saw that the donkey was half-way into the shop. Then he shouted, "Get out! get out!" But the donkey still insisted that he was only getting a little warm. So the blacksmith yielded. By and by he looked again and saw that the donkey was altogether in the shop. Then he sprang forward shouting excitedly, "Get out!" But the donkey said triumphantly, "Which of us will get out?" And thereupon he turned around and began to kick at the blacksmith. The donkey was in full *control*.

"THE END OF THAT WAY IS DEATH"

So it will be with us if we begin a course of yielding little by little to the desires of the fleshly mind. The end of the way which the

flesh craves, the Apostle teaches us, is death. St. Paul does not say that the *beginning* of that way is death; but that the beginning of that way *leads toward* death. If the old creature has gained a leeway, [R5935 : page 231] every step that is taken must be retraced, or the case is hopeless. The New Creature is to say to the old creature, "*You are not to be my master!*" The old creature is to be *made to know* that the *New Creature* is the Master. The New Creature develops at the expense of the old creature, the old nature, which must be put to death.

These things are not true of the world now, but will be true of them as respects their *sinful* flesh, by and by. If any during the Millennium shall yield to the fallen flesh, gradually becoming more and more alienated from the Lord, the end of that way will be death. But they will have every assistance in their efforts to resist sin and to develop righteousness. To the Church of Christ our text is applicable *now* and in the fullest sense. Let those of us now on trial for life or death eternal, watch and pray!

"Thou seest our weakness, Lord!
Our hearts are known to Thee;
O, strengthen Thou the weary hand,
Confirm the feeble knee!
Let us in life – till death –
Thy steadfast Truth declare,
And publish with our latest breath
Thy love and guardian care."

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